

**Connect-CTY®**

Reach Your Community In Minutes Using Your Own Voice

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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**QUESTION:** What is the Connect-CTY service and what does it do?

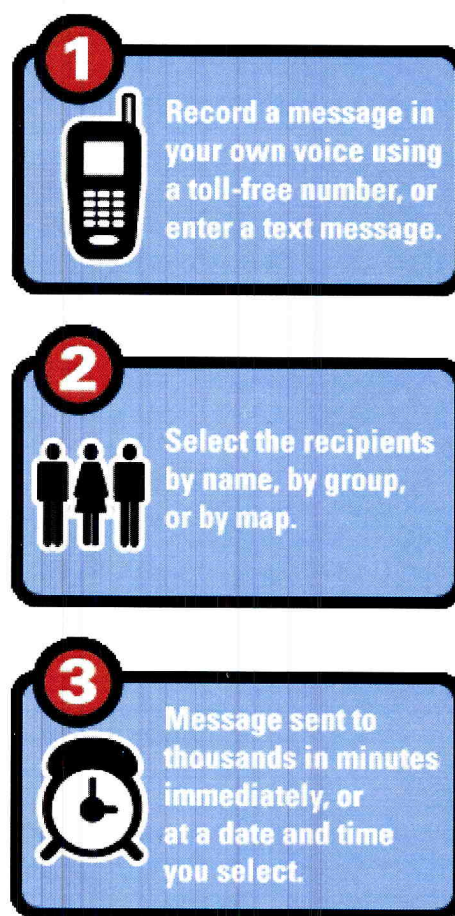
**ANSWER:** Built exclusively to meet the needs of local government, the Connect-CTY service enables mayors, emergency management directors, police and fire chiefs, health department directors and other designated users to record, schedule, send, and track thousands of personalized messages (voice, SMS text messaging, and e-mail) in minutes.

The Connect-CTY service lets you send an unlimited number of voice and text messages to residents, businesses, staff, or any combination of these groups. Messages can be sent in your own voice by either using a telephone and a computer connected to the Internet to schedule delivery of messages, or by using just a telephone to record and send a message should you be subject to an evacuation or unable to access a computer.

**QUESTION:** How does the Connect-CTY service work?

**ANSWER:** Users simply log on to our secure website, call a toll free number to record a personalized message, select the delivery time and date, and click "done" to send the message. The user's personal voice message and any additional text messages desired are then distributed to the entire community, or to selected groups, in minutes.

Results of the transmission to each individual phone number (Live

**Simple, three-step process to send a call:**

Delivery, Answering Machine, Bad Telephone Number, Busy, Fast Busy, or No Answer) are reported back upon call completion through e-mail and stored in each user's account log for future reference. There is also a streamlined system for evacuation situations that allows users to record and send a message using just a touch-tone telephone.

Because the Connect-CTY service operates as a fully hosted SaaS (Software as a Service) solution, officials can deploy a complete notification system— quickly and easily.

Connect-CTY clients receive the backing of dedicated Client Care Specialists who will assist with training, data transfers, technical support, tips, and proactive usage analyses throughout the life of the contract.

There is never any need to invest in hardware or software upgrades to utilize this service. Most importantly, the community will benefit from Blackboard Connect's superior call routing, throttling, and load-balancing expertise to minimize congestion at the local Telco level.

This key differentiator helped many clients in and around areas affected by the recent wildfires and hurricanes. By leveraging the **Connect** platform, officials were able to send messages before, during, and after the incident, despite extreme pressure on the local telecommunications infrastructure - including power outages - that could potentially impair notifications for local officials that rely on auto-dialer systems.

A fiscally responsible, fixed rate unlimited messaging plan ensures that there are no unexpected per message fees, and no cause for concern whether sending a message is cost-effective. Furthermore, every type of call is routed through our hosted SaaS solution.

The Connect-CTY service is not a blended system requiring an auto-dialer or shared phone lines; we take charge of — and incur the costs associated with — every call placed and every message sent using our dedicated system.

**QUESTION: How much does the Connect-CTY system cost?**

**ANSWER:** The Connect-CTY service is offered at a standard yearly fixed price, per resident or business contact, for unlimited messaging. There is never any charge to users for voice or text messages going to municipal employees, vendor lists, volunteer groups, etc. There are no fees for technical support, additional phone lines, maintenance or training, and you will not incur long distance fees and SMS messaging fees.

**QUESTION: How does the city acquire phone numbers?**

**ANSWER:** The Connect-CTY system provides a comprehensive list of phone numbers collected from over 210 providers. State-of-the-art database cleansing techniques are employed, while monthly updates keep your information as current as possible.

Your municipality will be provided with a main phone number for each business and residential address, where available. Blackboard Connect applies latitude and longitude coordinates so you can make a call via a map using our advanced Connect-CTY Geo-Calling feature. You can also supply your own data purchased through providers, and can upload your own employee and volunteer databases. A designated Blackboard Connect Client Care Specialist will work with you to collect, import and update your database.

**QUESTION: Will the Connect-CTY service work with the technology we use now?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. No hardware, software or additional phone lines are required to utilize any aspect of the of the Connect-CTY service.

The Connect-CTY service is a Web-based SaaS (Software as a Service) solution, used for sending messages via the public telephone networks, as well as by text and e-mail. It is likely that, the computer hardware you already use to store your database of phone numbers and perform day-to-day office tasks is adequately equipped, provided that you have an Internet connection and a Web browser. And, if no computer or Internet connection is available,



the user may still send a call using any telephone to access the Connect-CTY service.

**QUESTION:** Our city already has a "reverse 911" service. Why do we need the Connect-CTY system?

**ANSWER:** Many standard auto-dialer systems cannot match the speed, performance and ease of the Connect-CTY service. Blackboard Connect currently has Service Level Agreements to initiate at least 3 million sixty-second voice messages per hour and 1.8 million SMS messages per hour. We continuously add capacity as necessary to ensure that our customers have adequate supply to reach constituents. Currently, we utilize less than 2% of our overall capacity on a daily basis.

Messages will be delivered quickly, based on the local exchange carrier's available bandwidth. This is critical when the municipality has an important message that must reach all recipients quickly and cannot wait for the hours that an auto-dialer would typically take to place the calls.

Many of our clients who previously purchased auto-dialer systems have told us that their usage increased dramatically after switching to our service because it was easy to use, the price does not increase with usage, and our Client Care team helped them to implement effective, sound communication strategies. To learn more about auto-dialer and blended systems, please visit our **Dialer vs. SaaS** information page.

**QUESTION:** Who has access to these phone numbers?

**ANSWER:** Blackboard Connect takes the privacy and security of your data very seriously. All personally identifiable information (a phone number, resident name, employee ID, etc.) is only accessible to your approved users after each user has logged on to his/her password-protected account. Many providers e-mail data to you (such as which residents had bad phone numbers, etc.) as attachments. Blackboard Connect has a strict policy against this type of security breach. Blackboard Connect only utilizes secure

transmissions with its clients. No confidential information is ever transmitted between Blackboard Connect Inc. and its clients using e-mail or FTP, but rather always utilizes either a VPN tunnel or SSL.

**QUESTION: Can I "opt out" of Connect-CTY messages?**

**ANSWER:** Call recipients can opt-out; however, we recommend that you discourage them from doing so. The Connect-CTY service is used to send information that is time-sensitive and relevant to the public interest. If a resident or business opts-out, it will eliminate your ability to contact them using the Connect-CTY service. Should a resident or business insist on opting-out, you can remove the name from the Connect-CTY database by going into your account and deleting the contact from the system. Also, be sure to contact Blackboard Connect and request that the phone number be put on your municipality's Do Not Call list to prevent calling the number again when your data is refreshed.

**QUESTION: Is there a limit to the number of recipients I can contact?**

**ANSWER:** With the Connect-CTY service, you can send messages to an unlimited number of your city's residents, businesses, employees or a combination of these groups.

**QUESTION: How does the Connect-CTY service reach thousands in minutes?**

**ANSWER:** Blackboard Connect has telecommunications contracts in place with Service Level Agreements to initiate at least 3 million sixty-second voice messages per hour and 1.8 million SMS messages per hour. All messages are delivered quickly based on the local exchange carrier's available bandwidth. This is critical when the municipality has an important message that must reach all recipients quickly and they cannot wait for the hours it would typically take an auto-dialer to place those calls.

Service Level Agreements alone are not enough to ensure timely delivery of messages. Blackboard Connect and its partners analyze

traffic flow in and around local and regional areas to accommodate for network congestion at the point that every call is being sent and an appropriate call throttling schema is applied. This is a highly specialized service technique that has been refined over several years. New entrants into the bulk call delivery space often overlook the complicated, technical nature of this business and find juggling the priorities of their clients overwhelming.

Blackboard Connect works with our telecommunications partners to identify congestion levels at the outset of each call delivery job so as not to overload local infrastructure. Because local infrastructure is typically built to handle less than 20% (and frequently between just 5-10%) of the population utilizing the public switch telephone network (PSTN) at any given moment, and because local telecommunications providers are required to maintain capacity for first responders, local Telco providers will actually constrict capacity when their algorithms detect an unusual volume of calls.

With this in mind, Blackboard Connect utilizes proprietary, intelligent call throttling algorithms throughout every point of each call. Further, in addition to delivering voice messages via Time-Division Multiplexing (TDM), we use multiple delivery streams including VoIP, SMS, and e-mail to mitigate the infrastructure impact and assure the best likelihood of delivery. Blackboard Connect also utilizes proprietary call retry processes to maximize call delivery.

**QUESTION:** Can I send messages to just a part of my contact database, for example, only residents of a particular neighborhood?

**ANSWER:** The Connect-CTY service enables users to pre-define groups of contacts into an unlimited number of contact categories. Groups can be established at the user level, department level, and/or at the highest administrative level. Users can also search according to a street name to contact a subset of their contact database, or use our Geo-Calling feature to precisely target recipients using a map.

**QUESTION:** Do Connect-CTY message recipients need a computer?

**ANSWER:** No. Messages are delivered to phones, e-mail addresses, and TTY/TDD devices for the hearing impaired so a computer is not a requirement. If the message is a voice recording, the e-mail will contain a link to listen to the message via the user's computer and/or you can send e-mail as text. If the message is text-to-speech, the complete text of the message will be included in the e-mail. In addition, the e-mail will be branded with the municipality's logo to better personalize the communication.

**QUESTION:** Can I rely on the Connect-CTY system to deliver my messages on the date and time specified?

**ANSWER:** The Connect-CTY service provides authorized users with the option of recording and sending a message immediately, or record and store messages in their message library for delivery at a later time or date. Messages can be scheduled for delivery at any desired date and time, up to one year in advance. The Connect-CTY service provides authorized users with the option of recording and sending a message immediately, or recording and storing messages in their message library for delivery at a later time or date. Messages can be scheduled for delivery at any desired date and time, up to one year in advance. The Connect-CTY service has a built in "time check" reminder that warns users attempting to schedule a message beyond normal delivery hours (e.g., 3:00 AM).

The Connect-CTY service has been designed to maximize reliability and minimize downtime. It uses a fully-redundant, zero single point of failure network. If any aspect of the network were to fail, a backup system automatically responds to process message requests. In addition to network and hardware redundancies, the Connect-CTY service utilizes multiple message initiation centers across the United States that reside on multiple power grids to ensure optimal service reliability and uptime. Blackboard Connect continuously monitors all of its equipment and outgoing messages around the clock, 24x7x365.

**QUESTION:** Can we collect feedback from our community using



**the Connect-CTY service?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. The Connect-CTY service offers an interactive survey feature that allows users to create a message in the form of a customized survey to send to contacts. The recipients hear a message that contains a question that they are asked to respond to via their telephone keypad. The results are tabulated by the Connect-CTY service and the results are published to users via the Website and e-mail reports. Users have an almost instantaneous two-way communication channel to ensure residents, businesses and employees can offer feedback by simply using a telephone.

**QUESTION:** Can I send a message without Internet access, for instance, if I am evacuated or otherwise not near a computer?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Each user is issued a PIN secured, personal Dial-In Messaging Card they can keep with them at all times. In unforeseen situations, such as an evacuation or power loss, one can use the Dial-in Messaging Card to remotely connect to the Connect-CTY system and send a message using just a telephone.

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